Enactment of Forest Rights Act

3685. SHRI B.K. HARIPRASAD: Will the Minister of TRIBAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether follow-up action on the recently enacted Forest Rights Act has been initiated at the village level to ascertain the rights of forest dwellers and distribution of pattas to the rightful applicants;

(b) whether the Act has been challenged through petitions in various High Courts and the Supreme Court;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) whether Government proposes to appeal to the Supreme Court to consolidate all the cases pending with the High Courts, before its three member Forest Bench, for expeditious disposal?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF TRIBAL AFFAIRS (DR. RAMESHWAR ORAON): (a) The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 has been notified for operation with effect from 31st December, 2007. The responsibility for implementing the Act lies with the State/UT Governments. Soon after the operationalisation of the Act, this Ministry had addressed the State/UT Governments on 11.1.2008 for constituting various Committees under the Act and for initiating necessary action for recognition and vesting of the forest rights in the forest dwelling Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers. The State/UT Government are still in the process of implementing the provisions of the Act. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs has not received any information from the States so far regarding the vesting of forest rights and distribution of pattas to the eligible forest dwelling scheduled tribes and other traditional forest dwellers.

(b) and (c) Yes, Sir. The Act has been challenged through petitions in the High Courts of Andhra Pradesh, Chennai, Madurai and Bombay and also in the Supreme Court.

(d) A petition has been filed in the Supreme Court on 5-4-2008 for transferring all the cases pending in the High Courts for combined hearing by the Apex Court.

Scheme for research fellowships in Goa

3686. SHRI SHANTARAM LAXMAN NAIK: Will the Minister of TRIBAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Scheme for award of research fellowships is being implemented in Goa;

(b) if so, the details of fellowships granted to the applicants in the State since commencement of the scheme; and

(c) the financial assistance given to them, so far?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF TRIBAL AFFAIRS (DR. RAMESHWAR ORAON): (a) to (c) State Government of Goa has no such scheme. In so far as the Ministry of Tribal Affairs is concerned, it is implementing the Scheme of Rajiv Gandhi National Fellowship through University Grants Commission, under which financial assistance at par with UGC rates is provided to eligible ST students for pursuing higher